

Some unresolved quality concerns in Cameroonian higher education resulting from the negligence of adopting the Bologna Process Quality Assurance (QA) agenda

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Abstract— In 1999, the European Bologna Process reinforced quality assurance (QA) in higher education (HE). While Cameroon is a signatory non-member state of the Bologna Process, many unresolved quality concerns in its HE system still exist because the Bologna Process has been adopted on an a-la-carte basis whereby some action lines have been adopted while others have not – for instance QA. In Cameroonian HE, QA is a neglected pillar of the Bologna Process. This article examines some undisclosed quality concerns regarding Cameroonian HE in the advent of the Bologna Process. The study employs a qualitative research design using interviews and focus group discussions. Findings present quality concerns regarding: the lack of adequate educational resources; periodic monitoring, follow up/mentoring; student admission; and university ranking. The paper suggests a reconsideration of the Bologna Process in Cameroonian HE as a process and not an event with more action lines adopted such as QA; and the use of Total Quality Management (TQM) principles as workable strategies used in solving quality concerns in HE.

Keywords— Bologna Process, harmonisation, higher education, quality assurance, Total Quality Management (TQM).

I. INTRODUCTION

The cross-border movement of the Bologna Process QA agenda through the lens of harmonisation

This introduction unveils the cross-border movement of the Bologna Process reform through the lens of harmonisation across Europe, Africa (particularly the Central African Economic and Monetary Community/CEMAC region), and Cameroon. It highlights action lines that have been adopted to illustrate the gap in QA which underpin the negligence of

adopting the Bologna Process QA agenda in Cameroonian HE. It also presents the aim of the article.

According to Woldegioris, Jonck, and Goujon (2015), harmonisation is a process that benchmarks programmes, certificates and qualifications, quality control, qualification recognition, accreditation, QA mechanisms, and credit systems. The main aim of harmonisation is to enhance compatibility and comparability of qualifications geared at promoting employability across regions (Woldegioris et al. 2015) and establish a common language for regulators (Azatyan and Kopp 2012). Woldegioris et al. (2015 p.242) added that harmonisation also deals with 'policy integration in higher education' and makes use of 'voluntary intergovernmental integration', which creates commonalities. According to Bofinger, Habermas, and Nida-Rümelin (2012) and Majone (2014 p.15), with European Union (EU) harmonisation, Europeans were meant to learn that the preservation of their 'welfare-state model of society', as well as diversity across cultures of their nation-states, could only be possible by joining forces, combining their resources to exert global influence on the political agenda and provide solutions to global problems, which implies 'to abandon European unification now would be to quit the world stage for good'. Cippitani and Gatt (2009 p.388) added that based on the reality of problems plaguing the EU, a decision to integrate Europe by restructuring the European HE system was made by European Higher Education ministers resulting in the 1998 Sorbonne Declaration. The Sorbonne Declaration (Sorbonne Communiqué 1998) is known to set the foundation for the Bologna Process, and was a joint agreement between Britain, Italy, Germany, and France to harmonise the architecture of the European HE system. In 1999, 29 countries voluntarily signed the Bologna Process

and agreed on a shared set of action lines to create the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010 (Bologna Declaration 1999), and foster a competitive and attractive EHEA (Fearn 2008; and Torotcoi 2017). The objectives/action lines/agenda of the Bologna Declaration (1999) were to:

- ❖ Enhance the readability and comparability of grades/degrees and diploma supplements to enhance graduate employability and European HE international competitiveness;
- ❖ Adopt a HE system comprising of two main degree cycles: undergraduate and graduate; or three cycles including Bachelor's-Master's-PhD;
- ❖ Adopt a credit system known as the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) to enhance student mobility and lifelong learning;
- ❖ Enhance free mobility among students, teachers, administrative staff, and researchers;
- ❖ Promote quality assurance (QA) through European cooperation to develop comparable methodologies and criteria;
- ❖ Promote basic 'European dimensions in higher education' in integrated study programmes, research and teaching, mobility programmes, inter-institutional co-operation, and curricular development.

The biennial follow-up meetings of the Bologna Process also led to further action lines (Eta 2018 p.16). In Prague, the following action lines were added (Prague Communiqué 2001):

- ❖ Attention to lifelong learning;
- ❖ Inclusivity of students and HE institutions; and
- ❖ Boosting the attractiveness of EHEA.

In Berlin, this action line was added (Berlin Communiqué 2003):

- ❖ Doctoral studies and cooperation in the European Research and European Higher Education Areas.

Despite the addition of more action lines, existing action lines like QA among others have also featured in later Communiqués to provide room for monitoring and follow up. The Prague Communiqué (2001) for instance highlights that ministers aimed at promoting tighter cooperation between recognition and QA networks through mutual trust and acceptance of national QA systems¹.

¹For more information on the Bologna Process QA agenda relative to the Prague Communiqué (2001) and other Communiqués, see <http://www.ehea.info/pid34363/ministerial-declarations-and-communications.html>

Osterwalder (2009) remarks that across world region efforts have been made to harmonise educational systems. Although competition is paramount, a high level of regional cooperation is aimed at harmonising regional practices to promote competitiveness (Eta 2018, p.1; 2015). To ensure the success of the Bologna Process, Croché and Charlier (2012 p.467) note that the declarations between 2008 and 2010 led to a joint project organised by the European University Association (EUA) and the Association of African Universities (AAU), financed by the European Commission (EC) titled '*Access to success: fostering trust and exchange between Europe and Africa*'. In Africa, the African Union Commission (AUC) implementing the 'African Union (AU) Plan of Action for the Second Decade of Education in Africa (2006–2015)' embarked on establishing a strategy for harmonising African HE aimed at: promoting cooperation in information exchanges, devising a possibility of standardising the curricula, attaining comparability of qualifications, and harmonising procedures/policies to promote professional and academic mobility (Mohamedbhai 2013 p.9), reinforcing quality within HE and easing processes that trigger HE systems to effectively inter-operate (Woldetensae 2009 p.3). Woldegiorgis et al. (2015 p.246) remark that the 'African harmonisation strategy' and the European Bologna Process have similar objectives as they both address: credit transferability, QA mechanisms, promotion of staff and student mobility, mutual recognition of academic qualifications, and creation of regional HE. According to the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA 2015 p.2) although the African Arusha Convention has aided the implementation of harmonisation at three levels, including: (1) national levels through the creation of national regulatory bodies; (2) sub-regional levels through the creation of the African and Malagasy Council for Higher Education (CAMES) and the South African Development Community (SADC); and (3) regional levels by a 20-member committee representing 19 ratifying African nations, whose secretariat is accountable to the UNESCO regional office for education in Africa (BREDA); there still exist many criticisms². Due to those raised against the Arusha Convention, some 'promising initiatives' have been implemented, such as the creation of CAMES, which in collaboration with ADEA and the Association of African Universities (AAU) have been

²For more on the criticisms of the Arusha Convention, see ADEA (2015) on http://www.adeanet.org/en/system/files/policy_brief_harmonization_en.pdf.

authorised to adopt the 'Licence-Master-Doctorat approach' (LMD). This will speed the promotion of mobility and mutual recognition of qualifications among member states which are predominantly Francophone.

In the CEMAC African region, the LMD was a political decision adopted by CEMAC heads of state (Eta 2015). According to the CEMAC Council of Ministers (CEMAC 2006), within the CEMAC region the LMD action lines are:

- Professionalisation of educational programmes;
- Introduction of the credit system;
- Implementation of two-programme system (undergraduate and postgraduate); and three degrees: Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctorate;
- Adoption of nationally, sub-regionally, and internationally comparable readable certificates;
- The 'semestrialisation' of training periods (Eta and Vuban 2017 p.347).

QA has not featured among any of the action lines in this context. However, Nyborg (2004 p.4) notes that the Bologna Process has had consequences for national legislation; Cameroon, a signatory state to the CEMAC convention, has been compelled to implement the LMD in its HE system (Eta 2015). Eta and Vuban (2017 p.348) remarked that the LMD objectives were adapted by the Cameroon Ministry of Higher Education to harmonise the dual-degree structure (Doh 2008). Due to the bilingual nature of the Cameroonian HE system, the Anglo-Saxon HE system called it BMP (Bachelor's-Master's-PhD; Vuban 2018) or BMD (Bachelor's-Masters'-Doctorate; Mngo 2011) in accordance with titles of degree structures (Eta and Vuban 2016). According to the Ministry of Higher Education (2007 p.2-3), the LMD/BMP/BMD has three broad and nine specific objectives. The LMD/BMP/BMD in Cameroonian HE is meant to:

- Enhance social, cultural, and human development through senior staff training with a strong sense of citizenship; respond to the challenges of the Millennium from both Central African sub-regional and national levels;
- Ensure national economic development and graduate employability;
- Promote research to aid outreach in partnership with the private sector.

The specific LMD objectives in Cameroon (Ministry of Higher Education 2007) include: (1) ensuring training is internationally flexible and comparable; (2) fostering student mobility; (3) ensuring certificate equivalences; (4) fostering understanding of training grades and levels of professional integration; (5) fostering the possibility of

professional integration among students by establishing efficient applied and academic disciplines; (6) promoting transversal skills including mastery of ICT and modern languages; (7) developing new methods of teaching while integrating distance learning, alternating training, electronic (e-learning) and ICT; (8) instituting reforms in teaching programmes to ensure diversification of training courses in potentially lucrative fields; and (9) forming a new generation of productive graduates who can adapt in a fast dynamic global context. This shows that QA was not adopted as part of LMD/BMD/BMP in Cameroonian HE. Most participants in the study raised that although QA is part of the European Bologna Process, they do not understand why QA is not part of the Bologna Process/LMD/BMD/BMP in Cameroon. This indicates the Bologna Process QA agenda is a solution-based mechanism, appropriate for solving quality concerns in HE, but a neglected option in Cameroonian HE.

According to Vuban (forthcoming), the non-adoption of the Bologna Process QA agenda stems from three arguments/causes. First, a systemic relationship in the adoption/adaptation of the Bologna Process/LMD reform exists between CEMAC and Cameroon, which explains the non-adoption of the Bologna Process/LMDQA agenda in these contexts. QA was never adopted at the CEMAC regional level as part of the LMD reform, impacting strongly on Cameroon from a national level leading to the non-adoption of QA as part of LMD/BMD/BMP reform in the latter.

Second, there are two ways in which the Bologna Process has impacted on reforms outside Europe as while some nations seem to pilot the Bologna tools and action lines like QA procedures and diploma Supplement on an *a-la carte* basis (or piece-meal basis); other nations adopt action lines wholesale to permit them restructure their HE systems following the three-cycle Bologna model (World Education News + Reviews [WENR] 2007). Author (submitted manuscript) argues that the non-adoption of QA as part of the LMD action lines in CEMAC and LMD/BMD/BMP in Cameroonian HE originate from the fact that the Bologna Process in these contexts have been adopted on an *a-la carte* or 'piece-meal' basis.

Third, while the Bologna Process has been an ongoing activity in Europe along with more ministerial meetings, more action lines adopted, and existing actions monitored like QA; however, in Cameroonian HE, the LMD/BMD/BMP has been an event but not a process, otherwise, the ongoing activities of the European Bologna Process would have been an integral feature in Cameroon.

In addition to Vuban's three arguments, the fourth argument is that although the Bologna Process has led to global, regional, sub-regional and national harmonisation of HE systems which may make one to easily conclude that there is complete/total convergence or harmonisation of HE systems, however, using individual Bologna Process action lines to examine the process of harmonisation across contexts presents a different perspective. To this effect, I would say there exist two distinctive categories of harmonisation which I describe as 'surface harmonisation' and 'deep harmonisation'. With 'surface harmonisation' it is easy to tell (or clear) that HE systems are moving closer towards each other and are doing seemingly the same things even if they are not implementing all agreed upon action lines. In other words, 'surface harmonisation' superficially considers what goes on across HE systems - such as the Bologna Process reform. 'Deep harmonisation' considers details of what goes on across HE systems as prescribed by agreed upon action lines adopted by signatory states. With 'deep harmonisation' the extent to which action lines are implemented across HE systems are considered bringing about divergence and convergence. 'Deep harmonisation' occurs because individual institutions, nations, regions and sub-regions tend to implement policies, programmes, processes, action lines (and every other indicator used for ensuring harmonisation) based on their contextual realities. It is easier to identify areas of divergence/differences than convergence/commonalities in 'deep' than 'surface' harmonisation. This explains why from a 'deep harmonisation' perspective, I have been able to spot that although some form of harmonisation of HE systems exists in the advent of the Bologna Process from international, regional and national perspectives, the Bologna Process QA agenda has not been adopted in some regions (such as CEMAC) and nations (such as Cameroon) although 'surface harmonisation' of HE systems exists across contexts using the Bologna Process. In other words, I argue that the Bologna Process in Cameroon was adopted from a 'surface harmonisation' perspective.

These four arguments confirm that QA is a neglected pillar of the Bologna Process/LMD reform in Cameroonian HE and the reason why there still exist some unresolved quality concerns in this context needing attention. There has been no extant research regarding the Bologna Process QA agenda in Cameroonian HE, which justifies the worthiness of this article. The lone paper that analyses some concerns of the Bologna Process/LMD/BMD QA agenda in this context (Vuban, forthcoming) is not yet published, and this addresses quality concerns related to: the educational

content; personnel; professionalisation; 'private education syndrome'; and biculturalism. This paper importantly provides room to discuss more quality concerns caused by the negligence of adopting the Bologna Process QA agenda in Cameroonian HE. Therefore, the aim of this article is:

- To further examine some unresolved quality concerns encountered as a result of the negligence of adopting the Bologna Process QA agenda in Cameroonian HE.

This article also presents literature on existing advantages and concerns related to QA in HE, a quality theoretical framework known as Total Quality Management (TQM), methodology of the study, findings, conclusion, and references.

Existing advantages and concerns related to QA in HE

The institutional agenda for QA and national educational policy-making/reform has been connected to the Bologna Process (Esyutina, Fearon and Leatherbarrow 2013; Palfreyman 2008; Jakobi and Rusconi 2009). Quality is defined as satisfying the expectations of customers (students/parents/businesses/society), conforming to specifications or value, loss avoidance, conforming to requirements and fitness for use (Stensaker 2007).

According to Van der Bank and Popoola (2014 p.404–405), advantages of QA in HE include providing every student with an equal opportunity to learn and involvement of students in self-assessment in the learning process. QA provides essential information/processes regarding continuous improvement in training and education and the ability to benchmark programmes with other institutions, even internationally. It establishes an intellectual context in which academics become responsible for the evolution of their own academic/professional lives. Graduate employment is possible when quality education is provided. Quality in HE promotes responsibility and greater autonomy through an emphasis on self-assessment processes.

However, according to Task Force (2000 p.23–25), university lecturers and students in developing nations (such as Cameroon) suffer from peculiar issues that affect the quality of HE. While lecturers suffer from poor salaries and low incentives, outdated rote-teaching methods, staff recruitment concerns due to issues surrounding independent scholarships and academic freedom, concerns regarding the politicising of HE and lecturer absenteeism (p.23–24), students have their own crises. Task Force (2000 p.24–25) note that students suffer from difficult study environments including overcrowded classrooms and limited facilities, poor living conditions and services, poor transition from secondary to HE, concerns with selection criteria, lack of

remedial programmes, financial constraints, infrastructural maintenance, and managing research. Central problem areas governing QA within the Bologna Process in Europe from a student standpoint (Klemenčič 2009) revolve around inadequate funding of HE, curricula modernisation, skill development, and learner-centred teaching. Using principles of Total Quality Management (TQM) is perceived to be a workable strategy used in addressing quality concerns within organisations (HE inclusive).

The Total Quality Management (TQM) theoretical framework as a tool for ensuring quality in higher education

According to Sudha (2013), the advent of industrialisation and the adoption of a new scientific approach to management meant that quality was of central concern. TQM, originated from the United States, was transferred to Japan and was diffused and extended to North America and Europe (Grant, Shani, and Kristan 1994) – hence a cross border quality theoretical framework.

Sallis (2002) presents a chronology of the quality movement: the pre-1900s were characterised by quality as an integral aspect of craftsmanship. Between 1900 and 1920, emphasis was laid on quality control by foreman. The 1920s and 1940s were characterised by quality-control inspections. From 1940 to 1960, focus was on statistical process control. Between 1960 and 1980, efforts were made to ensure quality assurance and Total Quality Control. Between 1980 and 1990, Total Quality Management (TQM) was stressed. From 1990 to present, the focus has been on TQM, the culture of continuous improvement and organisation-wide quality management. According to Ali and Shastri (2010), The World Bank and UNESCO reports illustrate that social and private returns of HE are less (1%) than those of primary (25%) and secondary education. This has triggered thoughts about reducing subsidies for HE. Consequently, there have been attempts to raise the quality of, and boost multinational financial support for HE (Mbua 2003).

Although many theories of TQM exist, this paper focuses on Crosby's TQM theory. According to Crosby's four absolutes of quality management (Crosby 1992):

- Individuals define quality based on conformance to requirements;
- The best way to ensure quality is through prevention;
- Zero Defects are the performance standards for quality; and
- Quality is measured by the price of nonconformity and not indexes.

Relating Crosby's theory of TQM and his four absolutes to education, educational stakeholders define quality education based on educational norms and expectations. Richardson (1999) notes that norms and ground rules encourage behaviours that help individuals attain educational goals and objectives and discourages negative behaviours in HE. According to Farooq, Akhtar, Ullah, and Memon (2007), the aim of zero defect is to ensure that all HE stakeholders do things correctly by matching educational programmes with the organisation's (HEIs') personality. Alghamdi (2016) defines zero defects as '...commitment to success and the removal of failure; errors can be removed based on the willingness of institutions; and seeking to achieve zero defects tends to enhance profits through saving costs'. HEIs must guard themselves against citizens' large-scale criticisms in the wake of financial constraints (Levin 1998) by providing quality education – hence addressing the price of nonconformity. According to Alghamdi (2016) Crosby's fourteen steps to improve quality management include:

- Management commitment; setting a clear quality policy statement;
- Quality improvement team; everyone must be involved in improvement efforts;
- Quality measurement; showing nonconformance issues that enable the aim;
- Costs/price of quality; determining costs and values of quality;
- Quality awareness; increasing awareness among the organisation;
- Corrective action; working with employees to eliminate poor quality;
- Zero defects planning; every member of the HEI work to achieve zero defects;
- Supervisor training; educational leaders should identify their roles in the development process through training;
- Celebration of Zero Defects day; to create the approach of zero defects, informing staff there will be change;
- Goal setting; ensuring specific and measurable goals;
- Error-cause removal; communication between staff and leadership regarding difficulties in application;
- Appreciation/Recognition; staff recognition, such as prizes or certificates;
- Quality councils; involving professionals' investigation into how issues can be addressed;

- Repetitions of actions; quality of improvement never ends.

There are five barriers to TQM (Sebastianelli and Tamimi 2003) including: lack of customer(student) focus, inadequate resources for TQM, lack of leadership for quality, lack of planning for quality, and inadequate human resource development/management. Owlia and Aspinwall (1996) present a conceptual framework with six criteria, representing quality dimensions in HE including:

- Tangibles: sufficient equipment/facilities, ease of access, visually appealing environment, support services;
- Competence: sufficient staff, theoretical/practical knowledge, qualifications, teaching experience, communication;
- Attitude: understanding students' needs, willingness to help, availability for guidance/advice, personal attention;
- Content: relevance of curriculum to future opportunities, communication/teamwork, flexibility of knowledge, cross-disciplinary, primary knowledge/skills.
- Delivery: effective presentation/sequencing/timeliness, consistency, examination fairness, feedback from students; and
- Reliability: trustworthiness, valid awards, handling complaints, solving problems.

II. METHODOLOGY

This article aims to further examine unresolved quality concerns due to the non-adoption of the Bologna Process QA agenda in Cameroonian HE. Ball (1990) argues that inattention has been paid to research methodology particularly educational policy literature as it tends to be more dominated by critique/commentary than empirical research. Participants were asked about the types of HE reforms/policies they were aware of in Cameroon today, to conceptualise/explain these policies and problems. They were aware of the Bologna Process (LMD/BMD/BMP), professionalisation, QA, harmonisation, governance, and internationalisation and so on. Participants conceptualised these reforms/policies and explained their problems. Most participants said although QA is part of the European Bologna Process, they do not understand why QA is not part of the Bologna Process/LMD/BMD/BMP reform in Cameroon. Based on participants' perceptions and the four claims raised above, I argue examining some problems plaguing QA in Cameroonian HE is a timely venture in

policy studies/the Bologna Process community Cameroonian HE.

Data was collected in Cameroon in Yaounde, Bamenda, and Buea in the following institutions: Cameroon Christian University (CCU), University of Buea (UB), Cameroon's Ministry of HE (MINESUP) and many more. The study employed a qualitative research design (Poovey 1995) using interviews and focus group discussions. Based on Patton's perspective regarding selecting sample sizes in qualitative inquiries and purposeful and snowball sampling techniques, the sample size of this study was obtained comprising of 56 interviewees (including heads of departments, faculty officers, vice deans, and many more). Two focus group discussions were conducted on four students and four lecturers (totalling eight); meaning a grand total of 64 participants were used. Ethical considerations included avoidance of harm, anonymity, utilisation, and protection of data, right to withdraw, informed consent, reciprocity, and confidentiality. Participants had pseudonyms based on their status, followed by a letter, abbreviation/name of their institution, and year to ensure anonymity (e.g. University Official-A;UB:2015).

Credibility and trustworthiness of the research methods and data were ensured through crosschecking by my supervisor, Thesis Advisory Panel (TAP) members and research participants. Thematic analysis was used in analysing data with themes generated using NVivo software. Themes were based on common patterns or similar ideas of participants' responses. Various types of HE systems in Cameroon have been used including public/state universities (French-speaking/Francophone; and English-speaking/Anglophone/Anglo-Saxon universities), private universities and African/global universities, with comparisons where necessary to illustrate HE system quality concerns across these contexts. Although data is very rich, some literature has been used to boost criticality and duly referenced; as well as self-reflexivity (Brinkmann and Kvale 2015).

Due to the fact that QA is also a neglected pillar of the LMD in the CEMAC region, findings in this study can be transferred to the CEMAC region; (and perhaps other nations across the globe which have adopted the Bologna Process/LMD reforms but have not adopted the Bologna Process QA agenda) to inform policy and practice.

III. FINDINGS

This section focuses on the untold story of quality concerns in Cameroonian HE, which would have been solved by the Bologna Process QA agenda. Here, quality concerns related

to: student admission; university ranking; periodic monitoring, follow up and mentoring; and lack of resources are addressed. The term ‘university’ is also synonymously referred to as ‘higher education institution’ (HEI) or simply higher education (HE).

Concerns related to the nature of student admission

According to some interviewees, quality in Cameroonian HE is of concern in relation to student admission. An interviewee discussed what goes on at the Francophone and Anglo-Saxon universities in Cameroon:

If you take the University of Buea [Anglo-Saxon university], we have entry requirements in terms of points. In the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication for example, if you have anything less than eight points you can't be admitted into the department....None of these Francophone universities in Cameroon have entry requirements be it the University of Dschang or the University of Yaounde which pose quality concerns. After obtaining GCE“A” Levels, students who try to secure admissions into the University of Bamenda or University of Buea [public Anglo-Saxon universities] but are unable to do so either because they don't have five “O” Levels as it is the case with this university [University of Bamenda]or have passed in four subjects including English Language and excluding Religious Studies while satisfying other requirements as it is the case with the University of Buea, seek admission in Francophone universities.(University Lecturer A;UBa&UB:2015).

This quotation indicates a clear difference between public/state Francophone (French-speaking)universities and Anglophone (English-speaking/Anglo-Saxon)universities in Cameroon regarding student admissions. While Francophone universities practice an open-door policy (entry requirements and points not considered), Anglophone universities practice the selection criteria policy (entry requirements and points considered). In the aftermath of admitting Anglophone students who could not secure admissions in Anglophone universities in Francophone universities, such students face difficulties in understanding instruction delivered in French; lecturers also face high student-teacher ratios and administrators face problems controlling, governing, and managing large number of students, thus hindering quality. Despite the open-door admission policy in Cameroonian French-speaking universities, a participant narrated that Anglophone

universities also suffer from large intake and student admission problems, as every student wants to study in Anglophone universities because of the quality provided, career prospects and possibility of securing admissions abroad which is more realisable when studying in Anglophone universities:

If you ask Francophones there right now, everybody would want to come to Anglophone universities rather. This is because the quality is there, in terms of quality of: staff; teaching methods, the approach and commitment;and influence from the language [English] because English is a universal sort of language and you have a greater opportunity of having jobs than if you study only in French which narrows your scope and prospects of going to do postgraduate studies out of here. (University Lecturer A;UBa and UB:2015).

The crave for student admission into Anglophone universities is a problem from a quantitative perspective. Another interviewee recounted that ‘...This year we admitted into the University of Buea closed to 6,500 students and there are so many who were not admitted. So, each time we receive about 12,000 to 13,000 applications for admissions...’ (University Official/Lecturer-D;UB:2015). There is risk to quality due to high demand for student admission in Anglophone universities resulting in exploding student population and consequently high student-teacher ratios, lack of infrastructure, and facilities to cater for students' needs. Some participants remarked that admission into some private HEIs in Cameroon is poor as students who failed Advance Levels and could not seek admissions into state universities are admitted. This is known as ‘private education syndrome’ (Vuban, forthcoming). This evidence confirms that QA concerns in Cameroonian HE, such as that related to the nature of student admission, would be tackled if the Bologna Process QA agenda was part of the LMD reform.

Concerns related to ranking of universities

According to Voegtle, Knill, and Dobbins (2011) the Bologna Process has mounted pressure on national governments to ensure their legitimacy. Procedures of evaluation and reporting through Stocktaking reports have produced rankings to compare HE systems among signatory states (Voegtle et al. 2011). According to some participants, the global ranking of universities has served as a disincentive for Cameroonian HE. Findings indicate that the

lack of well-developed universities in Cameroon affects university ranking. Thus:

...when we talk of a university as far as I am concerned, a complete university should have [about] 17 faculties. I don't know of one in Cameroon that has this! Cameroon has not taken time to really develop one single university. Recently, there was a publication on grading universities in Africa. Cameroon's University of Dschang came number 800 in Africa! This just tells you what I am trying to talk about. Universities in Nigeria, South Africa really dominated! It means that we still have a lot to do [in terms of creating quality faculties among others]...If we find the University of Dschang being number 800 in Africa how much more in the world? We cannot even compare with the rest of the world! (University Assistant Lecturer-D;CCU:2015).

This denotes the lack of quality educational resources and capacity (faculties) among Cameroonian universities. The Times Higher Education World University Ranking illustrates that African universities have low standards compared to others globally. Between 2011 and 2015 two South African universities were placed between the 100th and 340th position on the league table (Uzochuku 2017). The education sector of Africa cannot be compared to Europe, North/South America, or Asia because of its numerous problems making it a low world-class standard³. However, the global benchmarking of HE systems to promote comparability (Voegtle et al. 2011) has failed to consider diversity and contextual realities across HE systems, particularly in developing nations such as Cameroon, which poses concerns for quality global rankings. Despite low positions on league tables, Cameroonian universities may be trying their best to provide 'quality' education, which has either aided students' admissions or fostered graduate employability abroad. Other participants said:

Look at what is happening in Africa concerning the ranking of universities. The ranking is done

according to western standards! (University Official-G;BUST:2015).

Today, we are measuring our yardstick by the ranking of universities. Cameroon doesn't have any ranking institution to rank us. We depend on ranking institutions in Spain, France, Germany, US, China and so on to rank us...When you say a university is ranked as per the number of Nobel knowledge be they Peace or Science or whatever, then you are knocking out African universities including South Africa [and Cameroon]. It's only four [universities] in South Africa and two [universities] in Egypt that have been ranked [globally]. So, if you use that criteria of a Nobel Prize winner then you will have less than 10 universities [globally] ranked from Africa [and Cameroonian universities will be absent]. (University Official-B;UYI:2015).

These quotations indicate that ranking of universities has been a westernised or globalised practice. Africa, and Cameroon in particular, lack ranking or accreditation institutions based on their existing educational contextual realities. This affects the definition of quality education and the scope of quality indicators from a global standpoint, disincentivising African and Cameroonian HE. Mohamed bhai (2013) remark that the lack of national QA accreditation mechanisms in many African states has been a major handicap. The second quotation further stresses that in addition to educational facilities (such as quality/quantity of faculties used for quality comparisons across HE systems), another ranking criterion and quality determinant is that of Nobel Prize awards, which tend to be a disservice to Cameroonian universities because Cameroon has not been awarded a Nobel Prize and therefore comparisons on quality with global HE systems cannot be made this way.

This confirms that QA concerns in Cameroonian HE would have been tackled if the Bologna Process QA agenda was adopted as part of the LMD reform. Task Force (2000) suggest that institutional accountability should be the responsibility of those concerned with governance who are responsible to periodically test and verify the standards of quality.

Concerns related to periodic monitoring, follow up, and mentoring

According to participants, concerns related to periodic monitoring, follow up, and mentoring is a major challenge for quality control in Cameroonian HE:

Sometimes in state universities, they

³ See problems plaguing African HE systems which pose concerns for quality under existing advantages and concerns related to QA in HE above.

[Cameroonian government] give what is known as research allowances and it is expected that they [university teaching/research staff] do research. But I have my own way I look at this...., the government does not even care if these people do research. You [Cameroonian government] give somebody money to do something, you don't care if he [or she] [university lecturer(s) in public universities] uses it to do the thing. Why, because even those who end up doing research, the government does not use the data for policy. They just sit in their political meetings and take decisions. They don't care what the researchers are up to. What questions they want to answer and what researchers have as answers for them. So, you do research, your data remains in your drawers for the rest of your lives. It is never used! (University Official/Lecturer-C;BUST:2015).

This illustrates that poor follow up in Cameroonian HE serves as a major indicator for quality concerns, which can be viewed as: (1) the Cameroonian government restricts research allowances to state universities, while private universities are financially unsupported, posing research crises and quality concerns in the latter; (2) there is lack of follow up of research by the Cameroonian state (funder) as funding research is merely a state function than state investment in HE; (3) 'politics in education' partly explain why research in Cameroonian HE is useless as data is never used to inform policies/practices. Some interviews also stressed that quality concerns in Cameroonian HE stem from the privatisation of HE and poor mentorship:

Private universities in Cameroon are supposed to be mentored by public higher institutions but they [public universities and MINESUP] have gotten the concept of mentoring up-side-down. Wrong! With mentoring they [public universities and MINESUP] only look for results. If we [public universities and MINESUP] should mentor, we [public universities and MINESUP] should consider mentoring everything that is inputs, processes, outcomes, and feedback. We [public universities and MINESUP] do not have to mentor only results! If you are mentoring people doing certain things, you are looking at programmes, structures, processes, examinations, quality of teaching, course outline, curriculum relevance, and all that. That is mentoring! We [public universities and MINESUP] are supposed to be mentoring, in theory! You know we have more than 200 higher

education institutions which are private in this country! What are they [MINESUP and private HE providers] opening them for? Are they [MINESUP and private HE providers] happy to be stealing money from poor people? People just get crazy!!! (University Official-A;UB:2015).

This illustrates that although private HEIs in Cameroon are mentored by public HEIs, such mentorship is theoretical not practical. It seems private HEIs in Cameroon are just being assigned to state universities for mentorship for the sake of it but where actual mentorship is needed, this is absent from either a policy, programme, practice and process perspective. That is the mentorship of private universities by state universities in terms of structures, examinations, quality of teaching, course outlines, curriculum relevance among others are absent – thus posing quality concerns. Participants also noted that, the lack of follow up in public universities causes poor lecturer assiduity as they just do anything they want; go for lectures anytime they want; provide students with just manuals without trying to direct them on what to do; and some of them even show up just towards the end of the semester and run down (teach) the whole course(s) of the semester within just say two weeks – thus leading to quality concerns. This confirms that QA concerns in Cameroonian HE would have been tackled if the Bologna Process QA agenda was adopted as part of the LMD reform.

Concerns related to the lack of educational resources

Concerns about the lack of educational resources addresses a broad range of resources: human, material, financial, and time resources. Task Force (2000) affirms that problems faced by HE can relate to poor resourcing. Time is a typical resource constraint in Cameroonian HE:

....most teachers do not have the luxury of time to think how knowledge acquired in class can be applied out of the classroom. This is the major challenge they have because they have to think the application themselves but they do not have the luxury of time because as I said the teachers do not have a good pay package. So, they spend most of their time teaching extra classes [in other universities] in order to make earnings meet. So, this becomes a difficult problem for the provision of quality education. (University Official-A;UCAC:2015).

The lack of teaching time makes teaching difficult as well as the application of knowledge outside the classroom, essential for professionalisation/graduate employability (Eta

2017), and to extend knowledge in the economy (Klemenčič 2009). Poor salaries are one major barrier to time management for lecturers as they divert time meant for instructional delivery to seek employment in other universities to increase their income. This poses problems for assiduity in class, leading to quality concerns. Furthermore, participants also mentioned the lack of material resources/facilities including electricity, internet, equipment and infrastructure which pose concerns for quality. To illustrate financial constraints, an interviewee referenced the University of Bamenda:

One major problem is finance. Currently, the University of Bamenda [for instance] is just coping with what it has in terms of money. So, we still need the financial support to build new classrooms, equip libraries and get things worth running the universities. (University Official-K;UBa:2015).

This illustrates that problems Cameroonian HEIs face stem from inadequate finance needed to build and equip infrastructure and to hire staff needed to ensure effective quality education. Task Force (2000) affirmed that financial constraints pose worse conditions for teaching and learning. Cameroonian HE suffers from lack of qualified personnel caused by brain drain. An interviewee said:

Sometimes, some policies will not work because the brains that should look into those policies to make some sense are not involved; or they have been drained out of the system and this is a major aspect of quality assurance problems and quality control problems. (University Official/Lecturer-C;BUST:2015).

This indicates that as university staff suffer from brain drain, this poses concerns for QA and quality control in relation to policy making and policy implementation. Teachers also suffer from work overload, low pay, and lack of expertise. These quality concerns would have been solved if the Bologna Process QA agenda was adopted as part of the LMD reform.

IV. CONCLUSION

This article examined undisclosed/unresolved quality concerns due to the non-adoption of the Bologna Process QA agenda in Cameroonian HE, caused by (1) the Bologna Process/LMD in Cameroonian HE has been adopted on an *a-la-carte* basis (World Education News + Reviews [WENR] 2007), whereby some action lines have been adopted, while others have not been adopted - for instance QA; (2) the Bologna Process/LMD in Cameroonian HE is an event not a process; (3) the systemic relationship between CEMAC and

Cameroon in the adoption/adaptation of the LMD explain that not applying QA at the CEMAC regional level influences the same in Cameroon; and (4) the Bologna Process in Cameroonian HE has been adopted from a surface harmonisation perspective. The article examined QA concerns such as that related to: student admission; university ranking; periodic monitoring, follow up and mentoring; and lack of resources. Central problem areas governing QA within the Bologna Process in Europe from a student standpoint (Klemenčič 2009) revolve around inadequate funding of HE, curricula modernisation, skill development, and learner-centred teaching. QA concerns related to the Bologna Process therefore remain a central focus. The Total Quality Management (TQM) theory (Alghamdi 2016) could be used to solve quality concerns in HE (Sudha 2013). Alghamdi (2016) notes that Crosby's 14 TQM steps to improve quality management include: (1) reinforcing management commitment; (2) ensuring quality improvement team; (3) promoting quality measurement; (4) examining costs/price of quality; (5) ensuring quality awareness; (6) considering corrective action; (7) Zero Defects planning; (8) promoting supervisor training; (9) celebrating Zero Defects day; (10) establishing criteria for goal setting; (11) ensuring error-cause removal; (12) encouraging appreciation/recognition; (13) using quality councils; and (14) repeating actions. To better understand quality in HE, a holistic perspective of quality in terms of its conceptualisations, concerns, contributions of HE stakeholders in the provision of QA and quality control, the role of QA and accreditation agencies, QA strategies, and QA theories is needed. I recommend researching into these areas to boost the quality of the Bologna Process/LMD across European, African, CEMAC and Cameroonian HE systems.

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DECLARATION OF INTEREST STATEMENT

Not applicable!

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